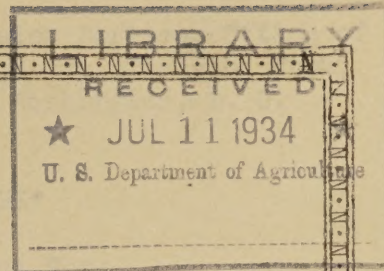


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# AIMS and IDEALS IN EXTENSION WORK

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

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## AIMS AND IDEALS IN EXTENSION WORK\*

C. W. Warburton, Director of Extension Work

Your committee asked me to talk on "Ideals in Extension Work," but I am going to extend that subject somewhat and preface its brief discussion with a statement on some of the aims of extension activities. Both the aims and ideals of extension work have been discussed many times in your conferences by those whose connection with them have been longer and more intimate than mine, and all I can hope to do to-day is to bring these aims and ideals again before you, perhaps in a little different language.

I often find use for Fernald's "English Synonyms and Antonyms." I commend it or some similar work to all who are interested in exactness of speech, and that should include all of us. Possibly it would be helpful in solving crossword puzzles, but I have not tried it for that purpose. Fernald says, "The aim is the direction in which one shoots, or sometimes that which is aimed at. The mark is that at which one shoots; the goal, that toward which one runs. All alike indicate the direction of endeavor." In the paragraphs which follow I want to catalog some of the more important directions in which we are shooting, without attempting to determine which of these are of most importance. Their relative rank will naturally vary in different States and in different communities. I have attempted to touch only a few of the high spots.

On the farm, we are for:

(1) Better crops. - Better crops in field, orchard, garden, and woodlot. This means better preparation of the land, more intelligent fertilization, better choice of varieties, better seed, better cultivation, better control of weeds and insect and disease pests, better care in harvesting and storing, and all the multitude of other things that contribute to efficient and economical crop production. It does not necessarily mean increased total production, but it means either a better product at the same cost or production at decreased cost per unit.

(2) Better livestock. - Better and more efficient flocks and herds. This means more intelligent selection of breeds to fit particular needs, selection of better animals, elimination of scrubs, better management, care, and feeding. It means again not necessarily increased production, but more economical and efficient production per unit, whether that unit be the pound of fat steer, lamb, or hog, the gallon of milk, the dozen eggs, or whatever the product may be.

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\*A paper delivered at the Northeastern extension conference, Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City, February 24, 25, and 26, 1925.



(3) Better farm management. - More intelligent choice of crops and livestock to meet market demands, more and better information on supply, demand, price trends, and all the other factors which enable the farmer to plan his breeding and seeding operations, not on the price of the product at the moment but on the probably price when the product is to be sold. We aim to aid farmers better to arrange their fields and farmsteads, better to plan and construct their farm buildings, better to arrange their farm financing, and, most of all, to come out at the end of the year in better financial condition than they were at the beginning.

(4) Better marketing. - Just where production ends and marketing begins is difficult to say, but better marketing presupposes more attention to producing the article and the quality the market demands, and then putting that article in the best possible shape to get from it its full value. We are for more careful grading and packing of those farm products where uniformity and attractiveness are essential to adequate return. We are for payment to the producer according to the grade and quality of his product, and for return to him of a greater proportion of the ultimate value of what he produces, whether that end is accomplished by cooperative marketing or by other means.

In the home, we are for:

(1) Better food. - Better and more nutritious food for all members of the family, better chosen to fit their particular needs and better and more tastily prepared. Better food in the home often means more attention to the home production of meats, milk, eggs, fruits, and vegetables, or, where these articles can not be economically or satisfactorily produced, provision for their purchase in suitable quantity and quality. Sometimes these articles can be more cheaply purchased than produced. The difficulty is that where eggs, milk, fruit, and vegetables are not produced on the farm, they usually are not purchased in sufficient quantity, no matter how well able the farmer is to buy them.

(2) Better clothing. - Not necessarily more expensive, but more attractive and more suitable articles of clothing for all members of the family, especially the women and children. The home demonstration agent has been a large factor in many communities in aiding country women and girls to so clothe themselves that we no longer can distinguish them from their city sisters. Sometimes the change is an improvement-- sometimes not!

(3) Better homes. - Not only physically, with better and more convenient houses, more tastily and attractively furnished, and so equipped that the necessary duties can be performed with the minimum of effort, but better homes artistically, morally, and religiously. These latter are to be obtained, first, by the better standard of living made possible by better crops and livestock, better managed and better marketed-- the better home and community is the primary objective of all this-- and second, by the more abundant leisure for planning, reading, study, and recreation made possible by better equipment and a better ordered life.



In the community, we are for:

(1) Better citizenship. - Extension work, especially that among women and girls, has done much to develop latent qualities of leadership among many country folk. We need more of it, not only in the development of extension activities, but in all community affairs. Almost inevitably, as leadership is developed among rural men and women by participation in extension meetings, demonstrations, and the like, this leadership manifests itself in an awakened interest in the social, civic, moral, and religious life of the community. We need better rural schools, better roads, better local government, better churches, more and better community activities and amusements. The contribution of extension workers to these ends must often be indirect and incidental, but these are things to which we must give attention and thought.

(2) Better boys and girls. - On the country boy and girl depends in large measure the progress of our Nation in the future; this has always been true, and we believe it will continue to be true. Sanity, clearness of thought, patriotism, Americanism, thrive better in the country than in the city. In the boys' and girls' clubs, extension folks are doing a great work in teaching these boys and girls not only how to grow crops and feed and manage livestock, make bread, can fruit, and furnish a room, but how to conduct a meeting, speak in public, lose without bitterness and win without boasting, work with their fellows, and in short prepare themselves for better and more effective citizens, whether on the farm or elsewhere.

And now for a brief discussion of the ideals of extension work. Again quoting Fernald, "An ideal is that which is conceived or taken as the highest type of excellence or ultimate object of attainment. An ideal is meant to be perfect, not merely the thing that has been attained, but the best conceivable thing that could possibly be attained. The artist's ideal is his own mental image, of which his finished work is but an imperfect expression." And so our ideals in extension work are perhaps beyond us, but they are things for which we should strive.

(1) We want absolute honesty and sincerity of purpose, even to the extent of missionary zeal. In a recent editorial, the Kansas City Daily Drovers Telegram says:

The county extension agent is the circuit rider of the agricultural community life of America to-day. He is taking the place of the itinerant preacher of a former generation. His text is taken from the gospel of an act of congress under which county agent work was established a dozen years ago, and it reads "to help to establish a profitable, economically sound agriculture and a satisfactory home and community life."

Farm folks want real leaders. They give heed to no others. They measure the county agent who comes to them by standards as exacting as were the standards by which their fathers measured the circuit rider. The day has come when the county extension agent must be a man of character and of such attainments and



purposes in life as to be able to hold the confidence of the people among whom he works. Just as the preacher of the former day was the outstanding epitome of the moral character that should be the standard of community life, so is the new circuit rider in his influence among the people whom he would serve. He must show the evidences of the prosperity he would teach as he moves about from one community gathering to another; for how can one teach prosperity if he come in garb and conveyance as one who looks like the "ghost of famine." His appearance and his bearing speak the certain interpretation of the better program he proposes to teach.

(2) We want freedom from politics. - The extension worker can ill afford to offend his constituents by political activity, whether it be in party or organization politics or what not. The Oklahoma Daily Livestock News, in commenting on a recent extension conference in Oklahoma, says, among other things:

A word of commendation. Little is heard of the county agent in politics. To this he owes his already many years of merit and recognition. Keep out of the political arena whether it be precinct, township, district, county, or state. You have a mission endless in its scope and political bickerings are of no assistance.

(3) We want freedom from business entanglements. - The extension worker, so long as he is supported by Federal, State, or county funds, is a servant of all the people. The moment he engages in business activity, acting as buying or selling agent for any group or class, he loses his position as a public servant and becomes the servant of only a part of his community. Almost every day, there come to my office complaints of the business activities of county agents. Here, at least, is where the home demonstration agents usually keep out of difficulties. Some of my most frequent callers are representatives of the fertilizer trade, the seed trade, and the like, protesting because county agents are entering into commercial activities. I realize that this is a difficult field to keep away from, and that temporarily it may appear to win the approval of those who are served, but farmers and their families must be taught to conduct their own business activities and not depend on the county agent to buy and sell for them.

And while I am speaking of freedom from business entanglements, I want to express my concern at the attempts of business interests to use boys' and girls' clubs for their own selfish ends. Many extension officials are coming to feel that prizes, contests, long trips, and the like for club members, financed by business interests, are a detriment rather than a help to club work. This is one of our serious problems. Rather let us have more local club camps, short courses, trips to points of historic interest. Let our ideal be the maintenance of boys' and girls' clubs on a wholly ethical basis.



(4) We want better extension workers, workers better trained and prepared for their jobs, not only in subject matter, but in salesmanship, in pedagogy, the psychology of advertising, in putting over to the farmer and his wife, the farm boy and girl, the lesson we want to teach. With the better training must come better conditions for extension workers, more opportunity for study and recreation, for relief from the grind, better pay, longer and more continuous service. The turnover is too frequent, the uncertainty of continuance of the work in a given county too great, to attract to and hold in the work as many good workers as we ought to have.

To those of you who heard Dr. C. B. Smith's memorable review of ten years of extension work at the meeting of the Extension Section of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges in Washington last November, his stirring sentences in closing are still fresh in your minds. The aims and ideals of extension work can hardly be better summarized. Here is what he said:

The great goal we are striving for in extension work is to plant the germ of improvement in men's minds; to goad on desire for achievement in every soul; to fan into flame that spark of altruism that every farm man and woman possesses but which, without encouragement, too often smoulders and dies; to promote economic success; but beyond that-- way beyond that-- to promote a social, educational, and spiritual home and community life that meets life's needs. It is not enough to grow more crops and make more money. Extension work is seeking to promote a contented rural people, a people who find satisfaction in their work, in each other, in the glory of the soil, the growing crops, the harvests, the bounteous table, the neighborly visit.

Our extension work of to-day may be regarded as a little leaven that is being planted in the rural communities of America which draws men together in common council, sets them to thinking about their business, awakens their minds as to betterment, and resolves them to action. Out of action by the individual comes learning and growth, and when that action results in the common good, out of it comes community progress, encomium for the individual, and the highest satisfactions of life.

And again, quoting the Drovers' Telegram editorial likening the extension worker to the circuit rider of old:

The field is white unto the harvest before the new circuit rider. If he preaches faithfully the gospel of a better agriculture, he may bring the salvation of a better day to those who find their life's work on the farm.

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